

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 180228

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SUBJECT: NOAA UNDERSEA HABITAT PROGRAM

1. SINCE 1971 THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE HAS SUPPORTED A SERIES OF MISSIONS UTILIZING AN UNDERSEA HABITAT LOCATED AT FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMAS. THESE MISSIONS ARE SCIENTIFIC IN NATURE AND HAVE INVOLVED GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCIENTISTS, THE LATTER FROM SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES INCLUDING UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AND OREGON STATE. EACH TEAM OF 3 TO 7 SCIENTISTS SPENDS APPROXIMATELY TEN DAYS ON GRAND BAHAM ISLAND. THEIR WORK IS DEVOTED TO THE INVESTIGATION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, IN PARTICULAR, REEF ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY. BROCHURES ON NOAA MANNED UNDERSEA PROGRAM BEING AIR POUCHED.

2. THE HABITAT PROJECT OF THE BAHAMA BANKS RESEARCH PROGRAM WAS AGREED TO BY THE GCOB IN FEBRUARY, 1971 IN AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (RODNEY BAIN) AND THE BAHAMAS UNDERSEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION. THE HABITAT IS OWNED BY THE PERRY FOUNDATION, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION LOCATED IN RIVIERA BEACH, FLORIDA. HABITAT IS ON ONE YEAR LEASE TO MANNED UNDERSEA SCIENCE AND TECH-

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PAGE 02 STATE 180228

NOLOGY OFFICE OF NOAA FOR PURPOSE OF CONTINUING THESE

RESEARCH INVESTIGATIONS THROUGHOUT FY 1974. HABITAT OPERATED BY TWO EMPLOYEES OF PERRY FOUNDATION: ROBERT WICKLUND RICHARD CLARK. FYI: WICKLUND AND CLARK MAY BE RESIDENTS WITH WORK PERMITS END FYI. WICKLUND MAY BE CONTACTED AT UNDERSEA EXPLORERS CLUB OF GRAND BAHAMAS IN FREEPORT.

3. SINCE INDEPENDENCE, IT IS APPARENT THAT QUESTIONS OF GCOB CUSTOMS REGULATIONS, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE MOVEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT IN AND OUT OF THE BAHAMAS, NEED CLARIFICATION. RECENTLY A BAHAMAS CUSTOMS OFFICIAL HAS REQUIRED CUSTOMS FORMS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL ITEM OF SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT IMPORTED FOR THIS RESEARCH. THIS HAS CAUSED A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF PAPER WORK AND MUCH DELAY. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE GCOB POLICY OR AN INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMS INSPECTORS INTERPRETATION OF REGULATIONS. PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCY CUSTOMS DUTIES ON SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT OF UP TO ONE-FOURTH OF 1 HAVE BEEN PAID AND THIS IS CONSIDERED REASONABLE BY NOAA. IMPOSITION OF THESE DUTIES APPARENTLY WAS AT THE DISCRETION OF INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMS INSPECTORS.

4. APPROXIMATELY 75 TO 100 SCIENTISTS WILL BE IN THIS RESEARCH DURING THE NEXT 10 MONTHS. AT THIS TIME, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SUPPORTED SCIENTISTS UNDER NOAA GRANT ARE ON SITE. THE NEXT TEAM TO USE HABITAT FROM UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA ETA 5 SEPTEMBER. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT DURING CURRENT SERIES OF INVESTIGATIONS, SCIENTISTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES, E.G. FRANCE AND FRG MAY PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAM. INVITATIONS TO FOREIGN SCIENTISTS WILL STATE THAT INVITATION IS SUBJECT TO SCIENTISTS BEING ABLE TO SATISFY BAHAMAS REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCH WORK.

5. IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE CUSTOMS PROCESSING IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE TO HAVE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH BAHAMAS OFFICIALS SO THAT PARTICIPANTS IN NOAA PROGRAMS WILL HAVE MINIMUM PROCESSING AT POINTS OF ENTRY. NOAA WOULD APPRECIATE MAKING LOW-KEY APPROACH TO GCOB TO DETERMINE SIMPLEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE OF FACILITATING ENTRY OF THIS EQUIPMENT.

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PAGE 03 STATE 180228

6. EMBASSY MAY INFORM GCOB THAT INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM EACH OF THESE STUDIES CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE TO BAHAMAS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND SCIENTISTS. IN PAST NOAA HAS ATTEMPTED ON SCIENTIST-TO-SCIENTIST BASIS TO SECURE PARTICIPATION OF BAHAMAS DIVERS, BUT HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL THIS ENDEAVOR. NOAA WOULD WELCOME PARTICIPATION QUALIFIED BAHAMAS DIVER AND WOULD BE PLEASED TO HOST VISIT OF SENIOR

GCOB OFFICIAL INTERESTED IN PROJECT.

7. NOAA PROJECT LEADERS PREPARED TO VISIT FREEPORT AND
NASSAU MID-OCTOBER TO DISCUSS PRGRAM WITH EMBASSY AND
GCOB OFFICIALS AS EMBASSY DEEMS APPROPRIATE. NOAA WOULD
APPRECIATE ANY ASSISTANCE EMBASSY CAN PROVIDE IN FACILI-
TATING THE CONTINUATION OF THIS IMPORTANT SCIENTIFIC
PROGRAM. RUSH

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